Prairie Update

A publication of the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority *Volume 35 Spring 2008*

Project First of Its Kind in the Missouri Coteau

Ron Wheeler, a Missouri Coteau area producer, saw an opportunity to help protect the natural environment on his land while enhancing his operation through a surprising discovery.

"Back in the 30's, my father discovered a spring on his land, which was one of the only sources of water in the area during periods of drought," said Wheeler.

In 2007, Ron's son Corey found that the spring was flowing once again through a coal seam. With the re-discovery of the geothermally-heated water source, Ron and Corey decided that the area near to the spring would be the perfect area for winter grazing.

A 160-acre paddock will be created through funding by the Government of Canada's Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk, and assistance from the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority. The Authority helped the Wheelers construct one and a half miles of four strand barb wire fence which, together with an alternative watering system, will convert hay land into pasture which will allow Ron to defer grazing on 90 acres of native pasture in the sensitive Missouri Couteau.

Ron and Corey have devised a system which will allow them to use the spring to provide geothermally-heated water storage for the cattle. A piece of casing measuring eight feet long by 40 inches in diameter was buried horizontally, with a half moon opening to the coal seam. This casing will be connected to an 18 foot long piece of six inch diameter pipe, which will then be attached to a one and a half inch water line. A winter water bowl will be installed on a three foot square by 18 inch thick cement pad, along with a 32 inch riser crib to provide geothermal heat to the water bowl and line.

An eight foot deep hole dug at the spring site yielded plenty of water for the Wheelers' cattle.

"Since the water source is slowly choked down and with the help of gravity, water can be kept at the bowl which is geo-heated with a slight pressure head, maintaining our water level when needed," says Wheeler.

The system does more than provide a dependable water source for the Wheeler's cattle. By allowing them to defer grazing on their native pastures, it will also help protect habitat for Burrowing Owls, which have been recorded in the vicinity. It will even help maintain riparian health along the coulee which runs through the quarter of native pasture from west to east.

"Overall, the new area will provide better conditions for the cattle into the winter with a reliable, heated water source and the owls will have a safe place to call home. We are quite excited about the project, since it is the first of its kind in the Missouri Coteau area," Wheeler says.

Photo courtesy Saskatchewan Burrowing Owl Interpretive Centre

Burrowing Owls prefer native short grass prairie in dry, open, treeless plains for nesting, but will forage over areas with taller and denser vegetation such as roadside ditches and near creeks and wetlands. They are migratory birds, returning to their Canadian breeding grounds each spring. Typically, they will return to the same area, and even use the same burrows, for their nests year after year. By deferring grazing on their native prairie, the Wheelers will also be protecting foraging areas for the Burrowing Owls.

What's New?

Upper Qu'Appelle and Wascana Watersheds Source Water Protection Plan

The Upper Qu'Appelle and Wascana Watersheds will soon be releasing the final version of their source water protection plan. Public consultation and feedback on the draft of the plan occurred in January.

Watershed planning in these watersheds has resulted in over 80 recommendations and actions focusing on preventing pollution and managing activities that may threaten water quality and quantity in the watersheds. There are eight key priority recommendations which pertain to the following issues: a watershed environmental health report, a repository of watershed information, development and delivery of the watershed plan, aquifer and ground water protection, water conveyance management, zoning bylaws, one water governing agency, and a communication strategy.

Implementation of the Upper Qu'Appelle and Wascana Watersheds Source Water Protection Plan will begin in April 2008. Copies of the plan are available at **www.swa.ca**. For more information, please email wuqwatr@sasktel.net.

North Saskatchewan River Watershed Program Coordinator Hired

Katherine Finn was recently hired as the new Program Coordinator for the North Saskatchewan River Watershed.

Katherine was raised in Saskatoon and attended the University of Saskatchewan, graduating with a Bachelor of Environmental Science. As Program Coordinator, she will play a key role in finalizing the North Saskatchewan River Watershed Source Water Protection Plan, and will oversee the implementation of the over 140 key actions contained within it.

A series of public open houses were recently held throughout the North Saskatchewan River watershed to give local people a chance to review the draft plan and provide their input. For more information on the draft North Saskatchewan River Watershed Source Water Protection Plan, please visit **www.swa.ca**. Or, contact Katherine Finn at (306) 441-3119, or by e-mail at kfinn@sasktel.net.

Residents of the Upper Qu'Appelle and Wascana Creek watersheds provided comments on the draft plan at a series of open houses held in January.

New Recovery Strategy for Sprague's Pipit

Illustration by Chris Jordison

A new proposed national recovery strategy for the Sprague's Pipit, a bird species currently listed as "Threatened" under the federal *Species at Risk Act*, was recently released.

A recovery strategy is a planning document that identifies what needs to be done to arrest or reverse the decline of a species. It sets goals and objectives and identifies the main areas of activities to be undertaken. In addition, one or more action plans will likely be developed to define and guide implementation of the recovery strategy.

This particular strategy was developed through a partnership between Environment Canada, Parks Canada, and the Governments of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. Each jurisdiction will be responsible for implementing the directions set out in the strategy.

For more information on the proposed recovery strategy for the Sprague's Pipit, or on recovery strategies and action plans targeting other species at risk, please visit **www.sararegistry.gc.ca**.

2008-05085/

The North American Waterfowl Management Plan in Saskatchewan

For over 20 years, conservation agencies in Saskatchewan have been contributing to a continental waterfowl recovery initiative known as the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.

Back in the mid-1980s, drought hit the prairies – and it hit them hard. Crops wilted in the field, dugouts dried up, and the northern forests were ravaged by fire. Everybody was feeling the effects, including the ducks. With their wetland habitat dried out, it didn't take long for waterfowl populations to take a nose-dive.

In response to these unprecedented losses, governments and agencies from across North America came together to develop a plan to bring the ducks back. They set an ambitious goal: to return waterfowl populations to the levels found in the 1970s. It would be a massive undertaking, requiring them to affect the habitat for waterfowl that migrated over the entire continent by coordinating hundreds of organizations to a single purpose. They also would have to find the vast amounts of money required to effect change and then get it into the right hands.

Though the challenge was daunting, the governments of Canada and the United States signed the North American Waterfowl Management Plan in 1986. Mexico joined in 1994, making it a truly continental effort. Obviously, these governments wouldn't be able to carry out the Plan on their own. A partnership between the public and private sectors needed to be forged. So a partnership of federal, provincial/state and municipal governments, non-governmental organizations and private companies, as well as many individuals, was brought together and included in the Plan.

The Plan is coordinated at the continental level by wildlife managers from the three partner nations. Within Saskatchewan, the delivery of the Plan is directed by a steering committee that coordinates activities with Alberta and Manitoba. This steering committee includes representatives from various federal and provincial government agencies, as well as from a range of non-governmental organizations.

The overall strategy of the Plan in Saskatchewan is to encourage land use practices on private and Crown lands which will benefit waterfowl and wildlife species by providing upland and wetland nesting cover. This is accomplished through a number of programs that are delivered by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Canadian Wildilfe Service (part of Environment Canada), the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment, the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, and Ducks Unlimited Canada.

To meet the goals of the Plan, these partners help landowners implement conservation projects. The projects are strictly voluntary, and focus on the conservation of habitat and maintaining the landscape conditions needed to sustain waterfowl. For example, a landowner could volunteer to manage their pastures, such as a parcel of native prairie or some property beside a wetland, to provide nesting habitat. This not only gives the birds a chance to get their young ones out of the nest and out on their own, it also allows landowners to make more effective use of their land, refine their forage system and increase their livestock's weight gains.

Photo courtesy Ducks Unlimited Canada

The Northern Pintail remains a species of concern for partners in the Plan.

At first glance, it may seem that protecting habitat one small piece at a time does not make much of a difference in the bigger picture. But these simple changes in the way we use the land, when combined with the many other projects throughout the province, have a significant international impact.

Since the implementation of the Plan, several factors have combined to bring waterfowl populations remarkably close to their 1970 levels. By working to a common goal, partners have indirectly affected a much larger portion of the continent's landscapes than what could have been accomplished through direct conservation projects alone. However, there is still much work to be done in areas of concern such as wetland loss, and with specific species such as the Northern Pintail and Scaup.

You can find more information about the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and conservation programs on the following partner websites:

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada:
www.agr.gc.ca

Canadian Wildlife Service:
www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca

Ducks Unlimited Canada:
www.yourland.ducks.ca

Nature Conservancy of Canada:
www.natureconservancy.ca

Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture:
www.agriculture.gov.sk.ca

Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment:
www.environment.gov.sk.ca

Saskatchewan Watershed Authority:
www.swa.ca

Focus On:

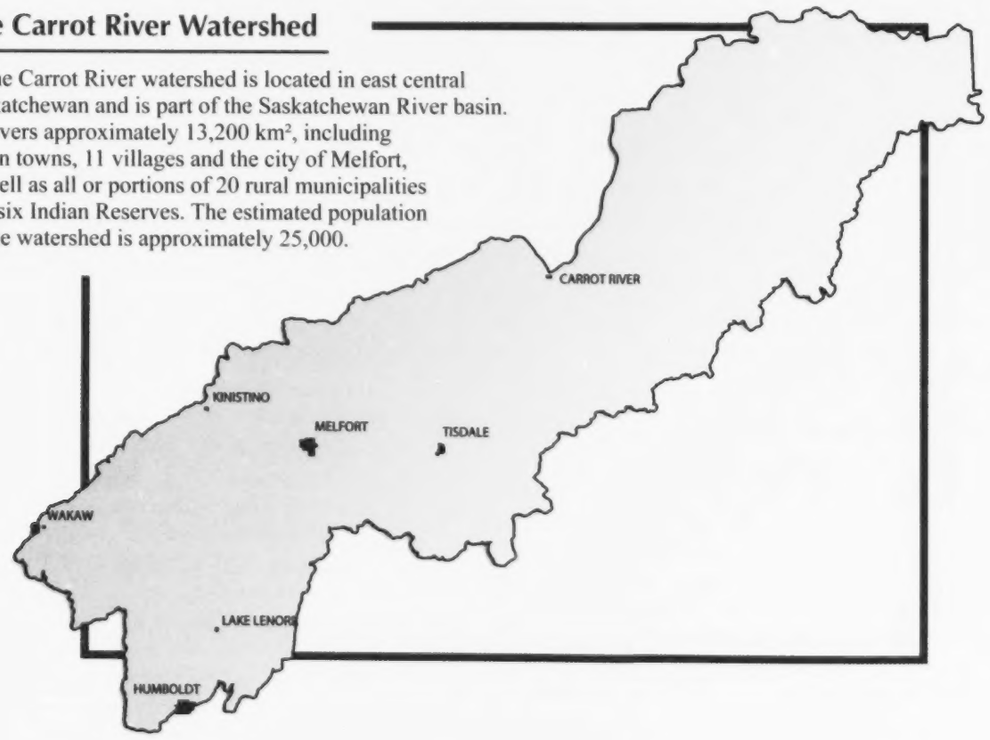
The Carrot River and Swift Current Creek Watersheds

The Saskatchewan Watershed Authority is in the initial stages of launching watershed planning processes in the Carrot River and the Swift Current Creek watersheds. These will be the seventh and eighth watersheds to take part in this process in Saskatchewan.

Watershed and aquifer planning brings together local leaders from municipal governments, First Nations and various non-government organizations, who will work in partnership as members of Watershed Advisory Committees to protect source water and our watersheds. At the conclusion of the planning processes, the committees will release the Carrot River Watershed Source Water Protection Plan and the Swift Current Creek Watershed Source Water Protection Plan. These action plans will identify source water protection priorities that have been identified by the people living in the watersheds. They will provide a clear indication of what needs to be done and by whom, and will specify realistic and acceptable timelines for these actions. Typically the plans require three years to complete.

The Carrot River Watershed

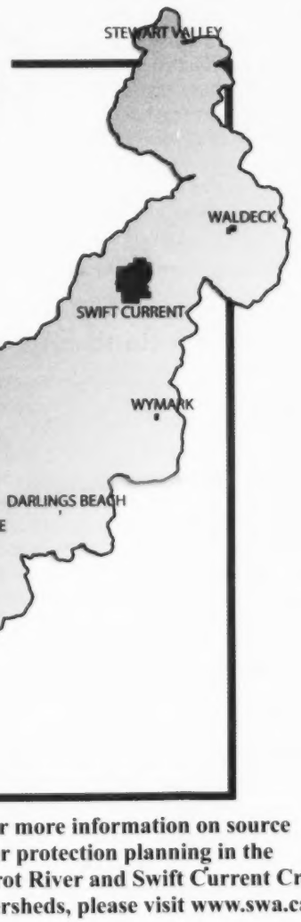
The Carrot River watershed is located in east central Saskatchewan and is part of the Saskatchewan River basin. It covers approximately 13,200 km², including seven towns, 11 villages and the city of Melfort, as well as all or portions of 20 rural municipalities and six Indian Reserves. The estimated population of the watershed is approximately 25,000.



Swift Current Creek Watershed

The Swift Current Creek watershed is located in south west Saskatchewan, and is also part of the Saskatchewan River basin. The area covered in the planning process is approximately 5,600 km² and includes one organized hamlet, two villages, four towns and the city of Swift Current. The estimated population of the watershed is approximately 23,000.

The planning process in the Swift Current Creek watershed will build on the outstanding work being done by the Swift Current Creek Watershed Stewards. This group is a not-for-profit corporation formed by local people in the Swift Current Creek and Rush Lake Creek watersheds, and is dedicated to enhancing water quality and stream health of the Swift Current Creek watershed by promoting awareness and understanding among water users.



For more information on source water protection planning in the Carrot River and Swift Current Creek watersheds, please visit www.swa.ca.

A Landowner's Guide to Water Well Management

Ground water is the primary source of drinking water for the vast majority of our province's rural residents, and is also an important source of water for irrigation and for many municipalities and industries. This guide provides private well owners in Saskatchewan with information on their ground water resources and managing their wells.

Beyond Borders – Shorebirds of the Western Hemisphere

The shorebirds of the western hemisphere include a diverse group of birds that includes sandpipers, plovers, godwits, dowitchers and curlews that migrate throughout North and South America. Each year more than 40 species of these birds nest in the northern reaches of North America, then migrate south for the winter – sometimes traveling more than 24,000 kilometres on this annual round trip. This booklet includes stunning pictures and informative descriptions of 24 shorebird species, many of which call Saskatchewan home for part of the year.

Classification and Management of Riparian and Wetland Sites

Riparian and wetland ecosystems are vital parts of the Saskatchewan landscape. When healthy, these areas perform important functions such as filtering sediment, storing water, recharging aquifers, providing habitat for fish and wildlife, and slowing stream flows. They are also a valuable source of forage for livestock. However, these areas are being pressured by our land use practices. This publication includes a detailed overview of the plant species that may be found in riparian and wetland ecosystems, and information on how landowners can classify these sites and manage them in a beneficial manner.

Managing Saskatchewan Wetlands - A Landowner's Guide

Saskatchewan's wetlands are dynamic, functioning ecosystems. They are home to a rich array of plants, animals, birds, aquatic invertebrates, insects, fish, and other creatures. They also provide habitat links for dozens of migratory bird species. This guide is intended to promote an understanding and appreciation of the value of Saskatchewan wetlands, foster sustainable management of prairie land and water resources, and provide practical information on wetland management issues.

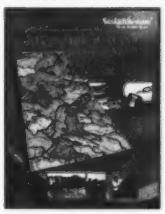
Managing Your Native Prairie Parcels – Your Guide to Caring for Native Prairie in Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan's landscape is one of the most altered land areas in the world. Most of the land suitable for crop production has been ploughed and cultivated. In many areas, less than three percent of the landscape remains as native prairie. This guide gives Saskatchewan landowners who have remnant native prairie – that is, patches of native prairie in areas dominated by non-native plants – a better understanding of the value of native prairie, and information on how to conserve it.

North American Waterfowl Management Plan

The North American Waterfowl Management Plan is discussed in some detail on the third page of this newsletter. Saskatchewan is a vitally important breeding ground for a number of North America's bird species. Across the province, partners in the Plan have undertaken voluntary conservation projects to conserve the habitat that these birds rely on. This brochure highlights and discusses Saskatchewan's role in this ambitious initiative.

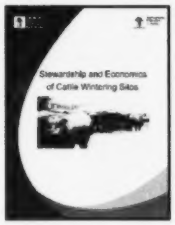
State of the Watershed Report



We all enjoy the benefits of a healthy and dependable water supply. One of our biggest challenges in this province is deciding how best to use, share, and enhance our water resources. To do so we need to consider, in an integrated way, information on the availability of this water and the health of our watersheds. Saskatchewan's State of the Watershed Report is a benchmark tool for assessing watershed health to ensure source water protection and sufficient water supplies in the province. It contains the relevant, accessible, timely, understandable and scientifically-defensible information we need to create effective environmental policies and make sound decisions about the management of our watersheds. The document contains a far more complete view of our province's watersheds than has ever been available before. **Available on CD-ROM only.**

Are You Looking for Information On Watershed Stewardship? Look No Further!

Stewardship and Economics of Cattle Wintering Sites



During winter, cattle need shelter, water and feed. Typically, these basic needs are met by establishing a cattle wintering site. These sites are often located near naturally sheltered areas and/or available water supplies. However, cattle wintering sites have the potential to negatively impact nearby surface and ground water sources. But, there are many cattle wintering options available to producers that protect water sources and herd health. This booklet discusses the stewardship and economic challenges faced by cow-calf producers in Saskatchewan, and provides detailed analyses of different wintering options.

Streambank Stewardship – A Saskatchewan Riparian Project

Healthy and functioning riparian areas provide a number of valuable services. In Saskatchewan, the landscape in the southern two-thirds of the province is dominated by agriculture, and many landowners have rivers, streams and creeks flowing through their property. This guide is designed to provide these landowners with information and assistance on how to maintain healthy riparian areas. It includes a number of viable management options for landowners who want to be good stewards of these special places.

Streambank Stewardship Fact Sheets

This fact sheet series builds on the information contained in the Streambank Stewardship guide. The topics addressed include:

- What Makes a Healthy Riparian Area?
- Farming Along the Stream
- Ranching Along the Stream
- Living on the Edge: Wildlife Along the Stream
- Beaver: Creator or Destroyer?

Riparian Area Fact Sheets

There are over 80,000 kilometers of stream course in Saskatchewan. They are incredibly valuable areas that provide a number of important ecological products and functions. However, the way we choose to use the land can create a variety of problems in riparian areas. These fact sheets provide information on:

- The Health of Riparian Areas in Southern Saskatchewan
- The Economics of Riparian Grazing Management

Native Prairie Stewardship Fact Sheets

Native prairie is an irreplaceable piece of our ecological history, not to mention a useful asset for landowners. This fact sheet series provides a wealth of information about native prairie, including such topics as:

- Your Wildlife Neighbours
- A Question of Value
- Protecting and Ecosystem
- Plants With a Sense of Community
- Harvesting and Marketing Native Seeds
- Managing Prairie Wetlands
- A Cultural Landscape
- Conservation Easements

Invasive Species Fact Sheets

Invasive plant species, also known as introduced or exotic species, include any plant species that are not native to a specified area. Since the beginnings of settlement on the prairies, many invasive species have been introduced onto the landscape, either on purpose or by accident.

Often, these plant species have the ability to out-compete native plants. These fact sheets discuss ways to manage the spread of specific invasive plant species in native prairie areas, including:

- Managing Crested Wheatgrass in Native Grassland
- Control of Knapweeds in Native Grasslands
- Managing Smooth Brome in Native Grasslands
- Management of Downy Brome in Native Grasslands
- Managing Leafy Spurge on Native Grasslands
- Managing Nodding and Canada Thistle on Native Grasslands
- Controlling Scentless Chamomile in Native Grasslands
- Managing Western Snowberry and Trembling Aspen on Native Grasslands

If you would like copies of any of these publications, simply phone our Regina office at (306) 787-0726. Electronic versions of many of these publications are also available on our website, www.swa.ca.

Hello Voluntary Stewards!

Thank you for taking the time to read the Spring 2008 edition of the Prairie Update! As always, we hope you have enjoyed the articles included in this newsletter, and we welcome any comments you have. You can find more information on the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority's Prairie Stewardship Program in back issues of this newsletter. These issues, as well as interactive maps featuring other stewardship project demonstration sites, can be viewed on our website at **www.swa.ca.**

Angela Bethune
Paul Chomos
Ryan Lorge

Correction!

The 2007 Saskatchewan Envirothon champions, pictured below, were the Walter Murray Collegiate "B" team (left-right): Claire Cooke (teacher), Rocky Wang, Howard Meng, Elizabeth Miazga, Bobby Xiao, and B.J. Bodnar. Some of the team members' names were mistakenly omitted from the last edition of the Prairie Update.

Share Your Ideas!

If you have comments or ideas about this newsletter, please contact:

Angela Bethune at (306) 787-8043 or
e-mail angela.bethune@swa.ca; or

Paul Chomos at (306) 787-9743 or
e-mail paul.chomos@swa.ca; or

Ryan Lorge at (306) 787-6958 or
e-mail ryan.lorge@swa.ca.

For information about the Prairie Stewardship Program please contact:

Jennifer Lohmeyer at (306) 787-8707 or
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Saskatchewan Watershed Authority

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Prairie Conservation Action Plan
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SaskPower
SaskPower- Shand Greenhouse
Wildlife Habitat Canada
Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Coming Events

For more information, please contact the following staff members in the office nearest you:

North Battleford	Jeremy Brown	446-7460
Regina	Etienne Soulodre	787-0661
Swift Current	Krista Connick	778-8280
	Jean Anne Prysliak	778-8424
	Bob Springer	778-8301
Weyburn	Amy Woodard	848-2354
Yorkton	Jason Puckett	786-5845
	Lyndon Hicks	786-1496

Contributions

The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Newsletter

Quarterly Update

(to June 30, 2007)

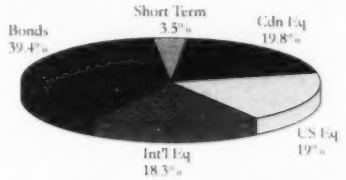
Financial markets were relatively unsettled in the second quarter and we saw a dramatic shift in perception from one where investors expected a slow down in the economy to one where investors had inflationary concerns. Bond prices fell and, as a result of a soaring Canadian dollar, global equity index returns were negative once the returns were converted to Canadian dollars. Only the Canadian equity market delivered positive returns.

The Canadian dollar continued to appreciate in the quarter, gaining 8.5 per cent against the U.S. dollar. The Bank of Canada also held its overnight rate at 4.25 per cent in the quarter, but has warned that inflation remains a challenge in Canada. The Bank of Canada expects the economy to grow by 2.2 per cent this year and by 2.8 per cent in 2008.

The return of the Saskatchewan Pension Plan (SPP) Contribution Fund was -0.8 per cent for the quarter and 0.7 per cent year to date, after administration costs.

The S&P/TSX Composite Index (Canadian equities) rose 6.3 per cent in the quarter, due to strong global growth, robust liquidity and continued mergers and acquisition activity. All ten sectors had positive returns. The Telecom sector was the best performing sector, continuing its run from the first quarter. BCE boosted the sector return after it surged on news that it was up for sale. Information Technology was the second best performing sector and the performance of Research in Motion, which accounts for 59 per cent of the sector, was the main contributor. The Financials sector was one of the weakest performing sectors as interest sensitive stocks were hurt by expectations of an increase in interest rates.

Contribution Fund Portfolio
June 30, 2007



The S&P 500 (U.S. equities) gained 6.3 per cent in $US, with the return decreasing to -2.0 per cent in $Cdn as the value of the Canadian dollar soared in the quarter. Only three of the ten sectors posted positive returns in the quarter (Energy, Information Technology and Industrials). The Utilities sector was the worst performing sector. The U.S. Federal Reserve left interest rates on hold for an eighth straight meeting.

Non-north american equities, as measured by the MSCI EAFE Index, rose by 5.9 per cent in local currency terms but -1.9 per cent in Canadian dollars. All countries in the Index posted positive local currency returns. The Canadian bond market, measured by the Scotia Capital Universe Bond Index fell -1.7 per cent in the quarter. While interest rates were stable in the quarter, bond yields rose sharply on speculation that a rebound in the economy would be accompanied by a surge in inflation. Higher gas and food prices in recent months added to these concerns.

The chart on the left shows the holdings in the Contribution Fund at June 30, 2007. ❖

Mandatory Retirement Age

SPP's Board of Trustees have recommended the Plan's legislation be amended to comply with the new federal rules for Registered Pension Plans (RPP) and Registered Retirement Savings Plans (RRSP). This new rule changes the retirement age from 69 to 71.

However, until SPP's legislation is actually changed, the mandatory retirement age will remain at age 69. SPP will notify affected members when the age is changed. ❖

Saskatchewan Pension Plan

2007 Contribution Deadline

Since 2008 is a leap year, the 2007 contribution deadline date is Friday, February 29, 2008. Several contribution options are available to help you meet this deadline.

Credit Card Contributions
Contribute using VISA® or MasterCard® on-line or by calling SPP toll-free.

Bank and Mail Contributions
Mail your contribution to SPP or contribute at any financial institution on or before February 29.

To avoid missing the February 29, 2008 deadline date contribute early or make arrangements for a pre-authorized contribution from your bank account or credit card. ❖

Did You Know . . .

On SPP's website (www.saskpension.com) you have access to the following:

Annual Report
If you are interested in viewing the financial statements or investment policies and highlights of the Plan, you can view them online. If you would like a detailed list of the Plan's investments you can view it online or call toll-free and we will mail the list to you.

Membership Application
The membership application can now be completed online. Simply open the form and type in the information. Use the tab key to move within the form. When the application form is completed print and sign it, then mail it to SPP using the postage paid return label. SPP requires the original signature of the member so the form cannot be submitted online.

Designation of Beneficiary
This form can also be completed online. Using the tab key move through the form and enter your beneficiary information. Print and sign it, then return it to SPP using the postage paid return label. ❖

Plan Earnings

In a recent survey of SPP members conducted by Fast Consulting, members requested an explanation of the term "earnings". SPP earnings are the profit or annual interest applied to your account. Profit includes interest, dividends and changes in the market value of investments that occur each year.

SPP annually allocates 100 per cent of the earnings, less operating expenses to it's members. The Contribution Fund is subject to market forces and as market returns rise and fall so do SPP earnings. Each newsletter reports the quarterly earnings of the Plan.

Contributing early in the year results in the opportunity for maximum account growth. Earnings begin immediately and over time the compounding effect will far exceed the value of your personal contributions.

Thank you to all SPP members who participated in the survey. ❖

Publications Mail Agreement No: 40065736

Youth and Retirement

Information from a recent survey sponsored by Edward Jones and conducted by Decima Research shows that 70% of Canadians ages 25 - 34 have begun a retirement savings plan. SPP also has witnessed similar results. The average age of new SPP members in 2002 was 42.9. In 2006 the age was 38.9.

Help your child down the retirement highway by enrolling them in SPP. The Membership Application is easy to complete on the website and the Pre-Authorized Contribution program is an easy and affordable way to start saving for retirement. ❖

The SPP Contributions Newsletter is issued three times per year to provide members with general information about current issues affecting SPP.

If any discrepancy arises between the information contained in this newsletter and the Act, the Act will prevail.

To contact SPP:

Toll-free	1-800-667-7153
Fax	1-306-463-3500
TTY	1-888-213-1311
Mail	Box 5555 Kindersley SK S0L 1S0
E-mail	info@saskpension.com
Website	www.saskpension.com

Saskatchewan Pension Plan